



## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Government Services State Board for Community and Technical Colleges**

**February 2009**

### **Meeting public demand**

The community and technical college system is experiencing record enrollments. With the worsening economy, Washingtonians are turning to the colleges to retrain for new jobs, earn college credentials in high demand fields, and get a quality, affordable education. To accommodate this demand, the college system is enrolling up to 7,000 full-time equivalent students over the level funded by the state.

### **Better access through online education**

To make college education more accessible and affordable to Washingtonians, the community and technical college system is rapidly expanding online courses. Last year more than 107,000 students took at least one online or online-enhanced community and technical college course, fitting their college education into their busy work and family schedules. These men and women, representing the equivalent of more than 20,000 full-time students, saved time and money, avoiding 1.9 million round trips to college campuses and saving 2.1 million gallons of gas. Providing this instruction through old-fashioned bricks-and-mortar institutions would require another four or five average-sized community or technical colleges.

Washington students are increasingly demanding online programs. eLearning enrollments in the college system are growing 20-30% each year, doubling every four years. Twenty-three colleges offer 86 different degrees and certificates online. Based on conservative projections, more than half of community and technical college enrollments will be delivered online by 2020.

### **Technology efficiencies**

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is implementing the recommendations of a new, far reaching Strategic Technology Plan to grow online learning and college services with limited resources. The college system has:

- Pooled students across the state in online courses ensuring full classes and wide distribution of course opportunities
- Created a one-stop web site that provides career planning tools, lists college programs, and shows how to enroll in and pay for college across the 34 community and technical colleges statewide
- Joined a national online library consortium for 24/7 library reference services
- Created an eTutoring consortium to provide free online tutoring for students

- Negotiated statewide software licenses for online course management, an ePortfolio tool to create permanent online briefcases of students' best work, and a webinar tool that saves travel for students, faculty and college staff

The college system has plans to:

- Create seamless, personalized, online student services including recruitment, retention, advising, a statewide course catalog, transfer and financial aid management
- Redesign courses using free, online textbooks to lower costs for students
- Join a multi-state library consortium with digital library resources to broaden students' access to reference materials across college and university libraries in Washington and Oregon.

### Improving results

Community and technical colleges are focusing growth in **high demand programs** such as health care, information technology, accounting and engineering technology. Two-year colleges have doubled the output of new registered nurses over the last six years.

This fall, colleges served 3,900 students with **Opportunity Grants**, providing tuition assistance and substantially improving retention for more low income students to complete high demand programs.

**Running Start** - a dual credit program for high school juniors and seniors – has reached record enrollments. Students take college classes and simultaneously earn credits toward their high school diploma and college degree. The program saves time and money for students, parents and taxpayers. Last year 17,300 high school students each earned an average of 25 tuition free college credits.

To speed time to degree for students with lower basic skills, the college system created **IBEST, integrated basic education and skills training**, which combines basic literacy education and training for a specific high demand job. The program has doubled and tripled course completion and retention rates in college technical training programs.

The community and technical college system has developed an innovative means for tracking results across college enrollments and for the program initiatives listed above. Colleges are increasing public accountability and focusing on improving outcomes for students through the **Student Achievement Initiative**, a new performance funding system that begins to shift funding from inputs to outcomes. Colleges are rewarded for increasing the numbers of students who achieve key research-based benchmarks critical to earning college degrees and certificates – improving basic skills, achieving readiness for college level work, first year retention, completing college level math, and completing degrees and certificates. After one year of implementation, substantial increases in student achievement have already been documented.

These innovations are broadening access to college education and training, lowering costs to students, and speeding time to degree, and will continue to create efficiencies for the state and for the state's taxpayers.